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The NATURE *of the* KINGDOM, *or* CHURCH, *of* CHRIST.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

KING,

AT THE

Royal Chapel at St. *James's*,

On SUNDAY *March* 31, 1717.

By the Right Reverend FATHER in GOD BENJAMIN Lord Biſhop of BANGOR.

Hoadly

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St. JOHN, xviii. 36.

Jeſus anſwered, My Kingdom is not of this World.

ONE of thoſe great Effects, which length of Time is ſeen to bring along with it, is the Alteration of the Meaning annexed to certain Sounds. The Signification of a Word, well known and underſtood by Thoſe who firſt made uſe of it, is very inſenſibly varied, by paſſing thrô many Mouths, and by being taken and given by Multitudes, in common Diſcourſe; till it often comes to ſtand for a Complication of Notions, as diſtant from the original Intention of it, nay, as contradictory to it, as Darkneſs is to Light. The Ignorance and Weakneſs of Some, and

the Paſſions and Bad Deſigns of Others, are the great Inſtruments of this Evil: which, even when it ſeems to affect only indifferent Matters, ought in reaſon to be oppoſed, as it tends in it's nature to confound Men's Notions in weightier Points; but, when it hath once invaded the moſt Sacred and Important Subjects, ought, in Duty, to be reſiſted with a more open and undiſguiſed Zeal, as what toucheth the very Vitals of all that is good, and is juſt going to take from Men's Eyes the Boundaries of Right and Wrong.

The only Cure for this *Evil*, in Caſes of ſo great Concern, is to have recourſe to the Originals of Things: to the Law of Reaſon, in thoſe Points which can be traced back thither; and to the Declarations of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and his immediate Followers, in ſuch Matters, as took their Riſe ſolely from thoſe Declarations. For the Caſe is plainly this, that Words and Sounds have had ſuch an Effect, (not upon the Nature of Things, which is unmoveable, but) upon the Minds of Men in thinking

thinking of them; that the very ſame Word remaining, (which at firſt truly repreſented One certain Thing,) by having Multitudes of new inconſiſtent Ideas, in every Age, and every Year, added to it, becomes it ſelf the greateſt Hindrance to the true underſtanding of the Nature of the Thing firſt intended by it.

For Inſtance, *Religion*, in St. *James*'s Days, was Virtue and Integrity, as to our ſelves, and Charity and Beneficence to others; before *God*, even the *Father*. *Ja.* i. 27. By Degrees, it is come to ſignify, in moſt of the Countries throughout the whole World, the Performance of every thing almoſt, except Virtue and Charity; and particularly, a punctual Exactneſs in a Regard to particular *Times*, *Places*, *Forms*, and *Modes*, diverſified according to the various Humours of Men; recommended and practiſed under the avowed Name of *External Religion*: *Two Words*, which, in the Senſe fix'd upon them by many Chriſtians, *God hath put aſunder*; and which therefore, *no Man ſhould join together*.

gether. And accordingly, the Notion of a *Religious Man* differs in every Country, juſt as much as *Times*, *Places*, *Ceremonies*, *Imaginary Auſterities*, and all other *Outward Circumſtances*, are different and various: Whereas in truth, thô a Man, truly *Religious* in other Reſpects, may make uſe of ſuch Things; yet, they cannot be the leaſt part of his *Religion*, properly ſo call'd, any more than his Food, or his Raiment, or any other Circumſtance of his Life.

Thus likewiſe, the *Worſhip* of *God*, to be paid by Chriſtians, was, in *our Saviour's* time, and in his own plain Words, the Worſhip of the Father *in Spirit and Truth*; and this declared to be one great End propoſed in the *Chriſtian Diſpenſation*: *The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall Worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth: for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him.* John iv. 23. But the *Notion* of it is become quite another thing: and in many *Chriſtian Countries*, that which ſtill retains the Name of the *Worſhip* of *God*, is indeed the Neglect,

lect, and the Diminution of the Father; and the Worſhip of other Beings beſides, and more than, the *Father*. And this, performed in ſuch a manner, as that any *indifferent Spectator* would conclude, that neither the Conſciences nor Underſtandings of Men, neither *Spirit* nor *Truth*, were at all concerned in the Matter; or rather, that they had been baniſh'd from it by an expreſs Command. In the mean time the *Word*, or *Sound*, ſtill remains the ſame in Diſcourſe. The whole Lump of indigeſted, and inconſiſtent Notions and Practices; Every thing that is ſolemnly ſaid, or done, when the *Worſhip* of *God* is profeſs'd, is equally cover'd under that *general Name*; and, by the help of uſing the ſame *Original Word*, paſſeth eaſily for the *Thing* it ſelf. Again,

Prayer, in all our *Lord*'s Directions about it, and particularly in that *Form*, which He himſelf taught his Followers, was a calm, undiſturbed, *Addreſs* to *God*, under the Notion of a *Father*, expreſſing thoſe Sentiments and Wiſhes

before

before Him, which every ſincere Mind ought to have. But the ſame *Word*, by the help of Men, and voluminous Rules of Art, is come to ſignify *Heat* and *Flame*, in ſuch a manner, and to ſuch a degree, that a Man may be in the *beſt Diſpoſition* in the World, and yet not be *devout* enough to *Pray*: and many an honeſt Perſon hath been perplex'd, by this Means, with Doubts and Fears of being uncapable of *Praying*, for want of an *intenſeneſs* of *Heat*, which hath no more relation to the Duty, than a Man's being in a *Fever* hath, to the Sincerity of his Profeſſions, or Addreſſes to any *Earthly Prince*.

Once more, the *Love of God*, and of *our Saviour*, was at firſt, in his own Words, and thoſe of St. *John*, many times repeated, the *keeping his Commandments, or doing his Will.* Joh. 14. 15, 21, 23. *ch.* 15. 10. I Joh. 2. 5. *ch.* 5. 3. II *Joh.* 6. But the *Notion* of it was, it ſeems, left very jejune; and ſo hath been improved by his *later Followers*, till the ſame *Name*, ſtill kept up in the Language of *Chriſtians*, is far removed from the

the *Thing* principally and firſt intended; and is come by degrees to ſignify a violent *Paſſion*, *Commotion*, and *Ecſtaſy*, venting it ſelf in ſuch ſort of Expreſſions and Diſorders, as other *Paſſions* do: and this regulated and defined, by ſuch a Variety of Imaginations, that an ordinary *Chriſtian*, with the utmoſt Sincerity in his Heart, is filled with nothing but eternal Suſpicions, Doubts, and Perplexities, whether he hath any thing of the true *Love* of *God*, or not.

I have mentioned theſe *Particulars*, not only to ſhew the Evil it ſelf; and to how great a Degree the *Nature* of Things hath ſuffered in the Opinions of Men, by the Alteration of the Senſe of the ſame *Words* and *Sounds*: but to give you Occaſion to obſerve, that there can be no Cure for it, in *Chriſtians*, but to go back to the *New Teſtament* it ſelf; becauſe *there* alone we ſhall find the Original Intention of ſuch Words; or the Nature of the Things deſign'd to be ſignified by them, declared and fixed by our *Lord*, or his *Apoſtles* from him, by

ſome ſuch Marks, as may, if we will attend to them, guide and guard us in our Notions of thoſe Matters, in which we are moſt of all concern'd.

It is with this View, that I have choſen thoſe *Words*, in which our *Lord* himſelf declared the Nature of *his own Kingdom*. This *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*, is the ſame with the *Church* of *Chriſt*. And the *Notion* of the *Church* of *Chriſt*, which, at firſt, was only the Number, ſmall or great, of Thoſe who believed *Him* to be the *Meſſiah*; or of Thoſe who ſubjected themſelves to *Him*, as their *King*, in the Affair of *Religion*; having ſince that Time been ſo diverſified by the various *Alterations* it hath undergone, that it is almoſt impoſſible ſo much as to number up the many *inconſiſtent Images* that have come, by daily Additions, to be united together in it: nothing, I think, can be more uſeful, than to conſider the ſame thing, under ſome other *Image*, which hath not been ſo much uſed; nor conſequently ſo much defaced. And ſince the *Image* of *His Kingdom*, is

That

That, under which our Lord himſelf choſe to repreſent it; We may be ſure that, if we ſincerely examine our Notion of his *Church*, by what He ſaith of his *Kingdom*, that *it is not of this World*, we ſhall exclude out of it, every thing that he would have excluded; and then, what remains will be true, pure, and uncorrupted. And what I have to ſay, in order to this, will be comprehended under Two *General Heads*.

I. As the *Church* of *Chriſt* is the *Kingdom of Chriſt*, *He* himſelf is *King*: and in this it is implied, that *He* is himſelf the ſole *Law-giver* to his *Subjects*, and himſelf the ſole *Judge* of their *Behaviour*, in the Affairs of *Conſcience* and *Eternal Salvation*. And in this Senſe therefore, *His Kingdom is not of this World*; that He hath, in thoſe Points, left behind Him, no viſible, humane *Authority*; no *Vicegerents*, who can be ſaid properly to ſupply his Place; no *Interpreters*, upon whom his Subjects are abſolutely to depend; no *Judges* over the Conſciences or Religion of his Peo-

ple. For if this were ſo, that any ſuch abſolute *Vicegerent Authority*, either for the making *new Laws*, or interpreting *Old* Ones, or *judging* his *Subjects*, in *Religious* Matters, were lodged in any Men upon Earth; the Conſequence would be, that what ſtill retains the Name of the *Church* of *Chriſt*, would not be the *Kingdom of Chriſt*, but the *Kingdom* of thoſe Men, veſted with ſuch *Authority*. For, whoever hath ſuch an *Authority* of making Laws, is ſo far a *King*: and whoever can add new Laws to thoſe of *Chriſt*, equally obligatory, is as truly a *King*, as *Chriſt* himſelf is: Nay, whoever hath an *abſolute Authority* to *interpret* any written, or ſpoken Laws; it is *He*, who is truly the *Law-giver*, to all Intents and Purpoſes; and not the Perſon who firſt wrote, or ſpoke them.

In humane Society, the *Interpretation* of *Laws* may, of neceſſity, be lodged, in ſome Caſes, in the Hands of Thoſe who were not originally the *Legiſlators*. But this is not *abſolute*; nor of bad

Conſequence

Conſequence to *Society:* becauſe the *Legiſlators* can reſume the *Interpretation* into their own Hands, as they are Witneſſes to what paſſes in the World; and as They can, and will, ſenſibly interpoſe in all thoſe Caſes, in which their Interpoſition becomes neceſſary. And therefore, They are ſtill properly the *Legiſlators*. But it is otherwiſe in *Religion*, or the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*. He himſelf never interpoſeth, ſince his firſt Promulgation of his *Law*, either to convey *Infallibility* to Such as pretend to handle it over again; or to aſſert the true *Interpretation* of it, amidſt the various and contradictory Opinions of Men about it. If *He* did certainly thus interpoſe, He himſelf would ſtill be the *Legiſlator*. But, as *He* doth not; if ſuch an abſolute *Authority* be once lodged with Men, under the Notion of *Interpreters*, *They* then become the *Legiſlators*, and not *Chriſt*; and *They* rule in their own *Kingdom*, and not in *His*.

It is the ſame thing, as to Rewards and Puniſhments, to carry forward the great

great End of his *Kingdom*. If any Men upon Earth have a *Right* to add to the *Sanctions* of his *Laws*; that is, to increaſe the Number, or alter the Nature, of the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* of his Subjects, in Matters of Conſcience, or Salvation: They are ſo far *Kings* in his ſtead; and Reign in *their own* Kingdom, and not in *His*. So it is, whenever They erect *Tribunals*, and exerciſe a *Judgment* over the Conſciences of Men; and aſſume to Themſelves the Determination of ſuch Points, as cannot be determined, but by *One* who knows the Hearts; or, when They make any of their own Declarations, or Deciſions, to concern and affect the State of Chriſt's Subjects, with regard to the Favour of God: this is ſo far, the taking *Chriſt's Kingdom* out of *His* Hands, and placing it in their own.

Nor is this matter at all made better by their declaring Themſelves to be *Vicegerents*, or *Law makers*, or *Judges*, under *Chriſt*, in order to carry on the Ends of his Kingdom. For it comes to this at laſt, ſince

ſince it doth not ſeem fit to Chriſt himſelf to interpoſe ſo as to prevent or remedy all their miſtakes and contradictions, that, if They have this power of interpreting, or adding, Laws, and judging Men, in ſuch a ſenſe, that *Chriſtians* ſhall be indiſpenſably and abſolutely obliged to obey thoſe *Laws*, and to ſubmit to thoſe *Deciſions*; I ſay, if They have this power lodged with them, then the *Kingdom*, in which they rule, is not the Kingdom of *Chriſt*, but of *Themſelves*; *He* doth not rule in it, but *They*: And, whether They happen to agree with him, or to differ from Him, as long as they are the *Law-givers*, and *Judges*, without any Interpoſition from *Chriſt*, either to guide or correct their *Deciſions*, *They* are *Kings* of this *Kingdom*, and not *Chriſt Jeſus*.

If therefore, the *Church* of *Chriſt* be the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*; it is eſſential to it, that *Chriſt* himſelf be the Sole *Law-giver*, and Sole *Judge* of his Subjects, in all points relating to the favour or diſ-

pleaſure

pleaſure of *Almighty God*; and that All His *Subjects*, in what Station ſoever they may be, are equally *Subjects* to *Him*; and that No One of them, any more than Another, hath *Authority*, either to make *New Laws* for *Chriſt's* Subjects; or to impoſe a ſenſe upon the *Old* Ones, which is the ſame thing; or to *Judge*, Cenſure, or Puniſh, the Servants of *Another Maſter*, in matters relating purely to *Conſcience*, or *Salvation*. If any Perſon hath any other Notion, either thro' a long Uſe of Words with Inconſiſtent Meanings, or thro' a negligence of Thought; let him but ask himſelf, whether the *Church* of *Chriſt* be the Kingdom of *Chriſt*, or not: And, if it be, whether this Notion of it doth not abſolutely exclude all other *Legiſlators* and *Judges*, in matters relating to Conſcience, or the favour of God; or, whether it can be *His* Kingdom, if any Mortal Man hath ſuch a Power of *Legiſlation* and *Judgment* in it. This *Enquiry* will bring Us back to the firſt, which is the only True, Account of the *Church* of *Chriſt*, or he

the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, in the mouth of a Christian: That it is the Number of Men, whether Small or Great, whether Disperſed or united, who truly and ſincerely are Subjects to *Jeſus Chriſt* alone, as their *Law-giver* and *Judge*, in matters relating to the Favour of God, and their *Eternal Salvation*.

II. The next principal point is, that, if the *Church* be the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*; and this *Kingdom be not of this World*: this muſt appear from the Nature and End of the *Laws* of Chriſt; and of thoſe Rewards and Puniſhments, which are the *Sanctions* of his Laws. Now his *Laws* are Declarations, relating to the Favour of God in another State after this. They are Declarations of thoſe Conditions to be perform'd, in this World, on our part, without which God will not make us Happy in that to come. And they are almoſt All genuine Appeals to the *Will* of that God; to his *Nature*, known by the Common Reaſon of Mankind; and to the imitation of that *Nature*, which muſt be our *Perfection*. The *Keeping his Com-*

mandments is declared the *Way* to Life; and the *doing his Will*, the Entrance into the *Kingdom of Heaven*. The being *Subjects* to *Chriſt*, is to this very End, that We may the better and more effectually perform the *Will* of *God*. The *Laws* of this *Kingdom*, therefore, as *Chriſt* left them, have nothing of *this* World in their view; no Tendency, either to the Exaltation of *Some*, in worldly pomp and dignity; or to their abſolute Dominion over the Faith and Religious conduct of *Others* of his Subjects; or to the erecting of any ſort of *Temporal Kingdom*, under the Covert and Name of a *Spiritual* one.

The *Sanctions* of *Chriſt's Law* are *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*. But of what ſort? Not the Rewards of this World; not the Offices, or Glories, of this State; not the pains of *Priſons*, *Baniſhments*, *Fines*, or any leſſer and more *Moderate Penalties*; nay, not the much leſſer *Negative Diſcouragements* that belong to *Humane Society*. *He* was far from thinking that *Theſe* could be the Inſtruments of ſuch a *Perſwaſion*, as He thought acceptable to God. But, as the Great End of his

his *Kingdom*, was to guide Men to Happineſs, after the ſhort Images of it were over here below; ſo, He took his *Motives* from that place, where His *Kingdom* firſt began, and where it was at laſt to end; from thoſe *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* in a future State, which had no relation to this World: And, to ſhew that his *Kingdom was not of this World*, all the *Sanctions* which He thought fit to give to *His Laws*, were *not of this World* at all.

St. *Paul* underſtood this ſo well, that He gives an Account of His own Conduct, and that of Others in the ſame Station, in theſe words, *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perſwade men*: whereas, in too many *Chriſtian Countries*, ſince his days, if Some, who profeſs to ſucceed *Him*, were to give an Account of their own Conduct, it muſt be in a quite contrary ſtrain; *Knowing the terrors of this World, and having them in our power, We do, not perſwade men, but force their outward Profeſſion againſt their inward Perſwaſion.*

Now, wherever *this* is practis'd, whe-

ther in a great degree, or a ſmall, in *that* place there is ſo far a Change, from a *Kingdom* which is *not of this world*, to a *Kingdom* which *is of this world*. As ſoon as ever you hear of any of the *Engines* of *this world*, whether of the greater, or the leſſer ſort, you muſt immediately think that then, and ſo far, the *Kingdom of this world* takes place. For, if the very Eſſence of *God's* worſhip be Spirit and Truth; If *Religion* be *Virtue* and *Charity*, under the *Belief* of a Supreme Governour and Judge; if True Real *Faith* cannot be the effect of *Force*; and, if there can be no *Reward* where there is no *Willing Choice*: then, in all, or any of theſe Caſes, to apply Force or Flattery, Worldly pleaſure or pain; is to act contrary to the Intereſts of True *Religion*, as it is plainly oppoſite to the Maxims upon which *Chriſt* founded his Kingdom; who choſe the *Motives* which are *not of this world*, to ſupport a *Kingdom* which *is not of this world*. And indeed, it is too viſible to be hid, that wherever the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* are changed, from future to preſent, from the World to come

come, to the World now in poſſeſſion; there, the *Kingdom* founded by our *Saviour* is, in the Nature of it, ſo far changed, that it is become, in ſuch a degree, what He profeſſed, *His Kingdom was not:* that is, *of this world*; of the ſame ſort with other Common *Earthly* Kingdoms, in which the *Rewards* are, Worldly Honours, Poſts, Offices, Pomp, Attendance, Dominion; and the Puniſhments are, Priſons, Fines, Baniſhments, Gallies and Racks; or ſomething Leſs, of the ſame ſort.

If *theſe* can be the true ſupports of a *Kingdom* which is *not of this World*; then Sincerity, and Hypocriſy; Religion, and No Religion; Force, and Perſwaſion; A Willing Choice, and a Terrified Heart; are become the ſame things: Truth and Falſhood ſtand in need of the ſame methods, to propagate and ſupport them; and our *Saviour* himſelf was little acquainted with the *Right* way of increaſing the Number of ſuch *Subjects*, as He wiſhed for. If He had but at firſt enlighten'd the *Powers* of *this World*, as He did St. *Paul*; and employed the *Sword* which

which They bore, and the *Favours* They had in their hands, to bring *Subjects* into his *Kingdom*; this had been an Expeditious and an effectual way, according to the Conduct of ſome of his profeſſed Followers, to have had a Glorious and Extenſive *Kingdom*, or *Church*. But this was not his Deſign; unleſs it could be compaſſed in quite a different way.

And therefore, when You ſee *Our Lord*, in *his* methods, ſo far removed from Thoſe of Many of his Diſciples; when You read Nothing, in his Doctrine about his own *Kingdom*, of taking in the Concerns of this World, and mixing them with thoſe of Eternity; no Commands that the Frowns and Diſcouragements of this preſent State ſhould in any Caſe attend upon Conſcience and Religion; No Rules againſt the Enquiry of All His Subjects into his *Original Meſſage* from Heaven; no Orders for the kind and charitable force of *Penalties*, or *Capital Puniſhments*, to make Men think and chuſe aright; no Calling upon the *ſecular Arm*, whenever the *Magiſtrate* ſhould become *Chriſtian*, to inforce his Doctrines, or

to

to back his *Spiritual Authority*; but, on the contrary, as plain a Declaration as a few Words can make, that *His Kingdom is not of this World:* I ſay, when You ſee this, from the whole Tenor of the *Goſpel*, ſo vaſtly oppoſite to Many who take his Name into their Mouths, the Queſtion with you ought to be, Whether He did not know the Nature of his own *Kingdom*, or *Church*, better than Any ſince his Time? whether you can ſuppoſe, *He* left any ſuch matters to be decided againſt *Himſelf*, and his own Expreſs profeſſions; and, whether if an *Angel from Heaven* ſhould give you any Account of his *Kingdom*, contrary to what He himſelf hath done, it can be of any Weight, or Authority, with Chriſtians.

I have now made ſome ſuch obſervations, drawn from the *Church* being the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*, and not of any *Men* in that *Kingdom*; from the *Nature* of his *Laws*, and from thoſe *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, which are the Sanctions of thoſe Laws; as lead us naturally into the true *Notion* of the *Church*, or *Kingdom*, of *Chriſt*,

Chriſt, by excluding out of it every *thing* inconſiſtent with *His* being *King*, *Law-giver* and *Judge*; as well as with the Nature of His *Laws*, and of His promiſes and Threatnings. I will only make *Two* or *Three* Obſervations, grounded upon this: And ſo conclude. And

1. From what hath been ſaid it is very plain, in general, that the Groſſeſt Miſtakes in Judgment, about the Nature of *Chriſt's Kingdom*, or *Church*, have ariſen from hence, that Men have argued from Other viſible *Societies*, and Other Viſible *Kingdoms of this World*, to what ought to be Viſible, and Senſible, in *His Kingdom*: Conſtantly leaving out of their *Notion*, the moſt Eſſential Part of it, that *Chriſt* is *King* in his own *Kingdom*; forgetting this *King* himſelf, becauſe He is not now ſeen by mortal Eyes; and Subſtituting *Others* in his Place, as *Law-givers* and *Judges*, in the ſame Points, in which *He* muſt either *Alone*, or not at all, be *Law-giver* and *Judge*; not contented with ſuch a *Kingdom* as He eſtabliſhed, and deſires to reign in; but urging

ging and contending, that *His Kingdom* muſt be like *Other Kingdoms*. Whereas He hath poſitively warn'd them againſt any ſuch Arguings, by aſſuring Them that this *Kingdom* is *His Kingdom*, and that it is *not of this World*; and therefore that No *one* of *His Subjects* is *Law-giver* and *Judge* over *Others* of them, in matters relating to *Salvation*, but *He* alone; and that We muſt not Frame our Ideas from the *Kingdoms of this World*, of what ought to be, in a viſible and ſenſible manner, in *His Kingdom*.

2. From what hath been ſaid it appears that the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*, which is the *Church* of *Chriſt*, is the *Number* of Perſons who are Sincerely, and Willingly, *Subjects* to *Him*, as *Law-giver* and *Judge*, in all matters truly relating to Conſcience, or Eternal Salvation. And the more cloſe and immediate this Regard to *Him* is, the more certainly and the more evidently true it is, that They are of his *Kingdom*. This may appear fully to their own Satisfaction, if They have recourſe to *Him* himſelf, in the *Goſpel*;

if They think it a ſufficient Authority that He hath declared the *Conditions* of their *Salvation*, and that No Man upon Earth hath any Authority to declare any other, or to add one tittle to them; if They reſolve to perform what They ſee, He laith a ſtreſs upon; and if They truſt no mortal, with the abſolute direction of their *Conſciences*, the pardon of their Sins, or the determining of their Intereſt in God's favour; but wait for their *Judge*, who alone can bring to light *the hidden things of darkneſs*.

If They feel themſelves diſpoſed and reſolved to receive the Words of *Eternal Life* from *Himſelf*; to take their *Faith* from what He himſelf *once delivered*, who knew better than All the reſt of the World what He required of his own *Subjects*; to direct their *Worſhip* by his Rule, and their whole practice by the General Law which He laid down: If They feel themſelves in this diſpoſition, They may be very certain that They are truly his *Subjects*, and Members of his *Kingdom*. Nor need They envy the Happineſs of *Others*, who may think it

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a much more evident Mark of their belonging to the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*, that They have *other* Law-givers, and Judges, in *Chriſt's Religion*, beſides *Jeſus Chriſt*; that They have recourſe not to *his own* Words, but the Words of *Others* who profeſs to interpret them; that They are ready to Submit to this *Interpretation*, let it be what it will; that They have ſet up to Themſelves the *Idol* of an unintelligible *Authority*, both in *Belief*, and *Worſhip*, and *Practice*; in Words, *under* Jeſus Chriſt, but in deed and in truth *over* Him; as it removes the minds of his *Subjects* from *Himſelf*, to Weak, and paſſionate Men; and as it claims the ſame Rule and Power in *his Kingdom*, which He himſelf *alone* can have. But,

3. This will be *Another obſervation*, that it evidently deſtroys the *Rule* and *Authority* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, as *King*, to ſet upany Other *Authority* in *His Kingdom*, to which His Subjects are indiſpenſably and abſolutely obliged to Submit their Conſciences, or their Conduct, in what is properly called Religion. There are *ſome*

Profeſſed Chriſtians, who contend openly for ſuch an *Authority*, as indiſpenſably obliges All around Them to *Unity* of Profeſſion; that is, to Profeſs even what They do not, what They cannot, believe to be true. This ſounds ſo groſsly, that *Others*, who think They act a glorious part in oppoſing ſuch an Enormity, are very willing, for their own ſakes, to retain ſuch an *Authority* as ſhall oblige Men, whatever They themſelves think, though not to profeſs what They do not believe, yet, to forbear the *profeſſion* and *publication* of what They do believe, let them believe it of never ſo great Importance.

Both theſe *Prètenſions* are founded upon the miſtaken *Notion* of the *Peace*, as well as *Authority*, of the *Kingdom*, that is the *Church*, of *Chriſt*. Which of them is the moſt inſupportable to an honeſt and a Chriſtian mind, I am not able to ſay: becauſe They both equally found the *Authority* of the *Church* of *Chriſt*, upon the ruines of Sincerity and Common Honeſty; and miſtake *Stupidity* and *Sleep*, for *Peace*; becauſe They would both equally

equally have prevented *All Reformation* where it hath been, and will for ever prevent it where it is not already; and, in a word, becauſe both equally deveſt *Jeſus Chriſt* of his *Empire* in *his own* Kingdom; ſet the obedience of his *Subjects* looſe from *Himſelf*; and teach them to proſtitute their *Conſciences* at the feet of *Others*, who have no right in ſuch a manner to trample upon them.

The *Peace* of *Chriſt's Kingdom* is a manly and Reaſonable *Peace*; built upon Charity, and Love, and mutual forbearance, and receiving one another, as God receives us. As for any other *Peace*; founded upon a Submiſſion of our *Honeſty*, as well as our *Underſtandings*; it is falſely ſo called. It is not the *Peace* of the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*; but the *Lethargy* of it: and a *Sleep unto Death*, when his *Subjects* ſhall throw off their relation to *Him*; fix their ſubjection to *Others*; and even in Caſes, where They have a right to ſee, and where They think They ſee, his Will otherwiſe, ſhall ſhut their Eyes and go blindfold at the Command of *Others*; becauſe thoſe *Others* are

are not pleas'd with their Enquiries into the Will of their great Lord and Judge.

To conclude, The *Church of Chriſt* is the *Kingdom of Chriſt*. He is *King* in his own Kingdom. He is Sole *Law-giver* to his Subjects, and Sole *Judge*, in matters relating to Salvation. His *Laws* and *Sanctions* are plainly fixed: and relate to the Favour of God; and not at all to the Rewards, or Penalties, of *this World*. All his Subjects are *equally* his Subjects; and, as ſuch, *equally* without Authority to alter, to add to, or to *interpret*, his *Laws* ſo, as to claim the abſolute Submiſſion of *Others* to ſuch *Interpretation*. And All are *His Subjects*, and in his Kingdom, who are ruled and governed by *Him*. Their *Faith* was *once* delivered by *Him*. The Conditions of their Happineſs were *once* laid down by *Him*. The Nature of *God's Worſhip* was *once* declared by *Him*. And it is eaſy to judge, whether of the Two is moſt becoming a *Subject* of the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt*, that is, a *Member* of his *Church*; to ſeek all theſe particulars in thoſe plain and ſhort

ſhort Declarations of their *King* and *Law-giver* himſelf: or to hunt after Them thro' the infinite contradictions, the numberleſs perplexities, the endleſs diſputes, of *Weak Men*, in ſeveral Ages, till the Enquirer himſelf is loſt in the Labyrinth, and perhaps ſits down in Deſpair, or Infidelity. If *Chriſt* be our *King*; let us ſhew our ſelves *Subjects* to *Him* alone, in the great affair of Conſcience and Eternal Salvation: and, without fear of Man's judgment, live and act as becomes Thoſe who wait for the appearance of an All-knowing and Impartial Judge; even *that King*, whoſe *Kingdom is not of this World.*

FINIS.

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